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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-sixth year

Identical letters dated 19 July 2011 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

It is with grave concern that I draw your attention to the escalation of Israel's illegal practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Since our last letter to you, dated 6 July 2011, the Israeli occupying forces have continued to use excessive and lethal force against Palestinian civilians, including via massive air strikes against the besieged Gaza Strip, causing civilian casualties as well as destruction to Palestinian homes and properties and natural resources, such as wells. At the same time, the occupying Power is recklessly continuing its massive and illegal colonial settlement campaign in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, gravely undermining the contiguity and integrity of the Territory and taking us farther away from realizing the two-State solution based on pre-June 1967 borders.

At the outset, we are compelled to once again underscore the grave situation in the besieged Gaza Strip, in which over 1.5 million Palestinians continue to suffer immeasurably as a result of Israel's illegal blockade, which has been imposed on them for more than four years now. This inhumane and most unjust situation continues to raise the deep concern of people from all over the region and the world, expressed, inter alia, in acts of solidarity such as the "Freedom Flotilla". In this regard, we express our serious concern about the boarding and seizure of a French civilian boat, the *Dignité-al Karama*, today in the Mediterranean Sea by Israeli military ships and marine troops. The *Dignité-al Karama* had been sailing to the Gaza Strip to deliver much-needed support to the population there, and the international community must demand that its passengers and the vessel be treated with full respect and accorded the necessary protection under international humanitarian law.

The situation in the Gaza Strip is also worsening as a result of a series of military air strikes that have been carried out by Israel, the occupying Power. These

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attacks have caused scores of injuries among Palestinian civilians, including children, such as the attack on Beit Hanoun on 17 July in which seven people from one family, including four children, were critically injured. The Israeli occupying forces also recently launched attacks on eight Palestinian fishing boats as well as an international boat that monitors the situation on the Gaza coastline. The excessive and indiscriminate fire caused serious damage to the boats, further undermining the livelihoods of the fishermen whose families depend on these boats for their income and survival.

These military attacks have intensified fear and panic among the entire Palestinian civilian population and serve as further evidence that the occupying Power plans to continue with its violent terror campaign against the Gaza Strip. In this regard, Israeli war planes recently dropped thousands of leaflets over Gaza "warning" residents not to go near the so-called buffer zone imposed by the occupying Power, similar to leaflets dropped during its 22-day military aggression against the Gaza Strip in which more than 1,400 civilians were killed, including hundreds of children and women.

The Israeli occupying forces also continue to unleash violence against the Palestinian people in the Occupied West Bank. On 13 July 2011, in Al-Fara'a refugee camp, near the West Bank city of Nablus, Israeli occupying forces shot and killed a young university student, 21-year-old Ibrahim Omar Sarhan, as he was leaving a mosque. The Israeli soldiers prevented ambulances from providing emergency aid to the victim, and he was left to bleed to death.

Such military raids have been increasing throughout the West Bank. The occupying forces even recently raided a summer camp for children in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of Occupied East Jerusalem, forcing the children to endure interrogations. The Israeli occupying forces also continue to use excessive force against peaceful civilian protesters, intimidating the protesters and typically causing injury among them. This includes an incident on 12 July in which the occupying forces fired stun grenades and tear gas canisters at protesters who had gathered in Al-Khalil (Hebron) to demonstrate against the illegal Israeli settlements.

At the same time, Israel, the occupying Power, continues and is intensifying its illegal and destructive settlement campaign, in a clear attempt to further colonize the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and create even more illegal alterations to the demographic composition, character and status of the Territory. This settlement campaign is being carried out by Israel in violation of its legal obligations under international law and United Nations resolutions, its obligations under the Quartet road map, which calls in unequivocal terms for the freezing of all settlement activities and the dismantlement of so-called "outposts".

In recent weeks, the Israeli Government has made a series of provocative announcements on its plans and intentions to further unlawfully confiscate and colonize Palestinian property and land. This includes, inter alia, the recent decision to expropriate large areas of Palestinian farmland in the Bethlehem area for the expansion of the illegal "Efrata" settlement; the approval by the occupying Power of the construction of 336 more settlement units in the so-called settlements of "Beitar-Illit" in Occupied East Jerusalem and "Karnei Shomron" west of Nablus; and the razing of 35 dunums of Palestinian land and confiscation of irrigation networks in the Baq'a area east of Al-Khalil. We again appeal to the international community to uphold their legal obligations in this regard. Israel must be held accountable for its

flagrant breaches in order to bring an end to this illegal, provocative policy that is narrowing the chances for achieving a just and viable peace with every passing day.

The extremist Israeli settlers have also further escalated their campaign of terror against Palestinian civilians and their villages across the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Settlers continue to harm and injure Palestinian civilians, including shepherds tending to their sheep, and to vandalize and destroy Palestinian properties and agricultural fields and crops, and the harassment and intimidation of Palestinian civilians, including children, continues unabated. On 10 July, an Israeli settler ran over and seriously injured a 6-year-old Palestinian child near Bethlehem. Just yesterday, 18 July, three Palestinian shepherds, who were herding their sheep on a hillside near the town of Mikhmas north-east of Jerusalem, were beaten and stabbed by Israeli settlers. Reports reveal that, in June 2011 alone, more than 139 settler attacks were perpetrated against Palestinian civilians and properties, including the destruction of over 3,600 olive trees and vineyards.

Extremist Israeli settlers have in the recent period also attacked international peace activists in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. On 18 July, two civilians affiliated with "Operation Dove" and one civilian with the "Christian Peacemaker Teams" were attacked by Israeli settlers using clubs and stones in an area near Al-Khalil (Hebron). In light of the continuation of such crimes, we must reiterate that Israel, the occupying Power, bears full responsibility for the illegal presence and all the illegal actions of its settlers, and we call upon the international community to apply the necessary pressure on the Israeli Government to immediately bring an end to the terror campaign being perpetuated by them against the defenceless Palestinian civilian population.

The current situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, reveals an escalation of illegal Israeli acts of aggression, provocation and destruction. It seems clear that the intent of the occupying Power is to entrench its illegitimate military occupation and to instigate yet another cycle of deadly violence between the two sides. Israel continues to reject the minimal basis necessary for resuming credible peace negotiations in accordance with the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-June 1967 borders, and, instead of making any real effort to create an environment conducive to negotiations, Israel is actually intensifying its violations of international law, further destabilizing the situation on the ground and seriously undermining all efforts to resume the peace process and sabotaging the two-State solution itself.

As we have stated before, we emphasize once again that the Palestinian leadership is committed to peace and the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, and will continue to exert all efforts to achieve the legitimate national goals of the Palestinian people, including their right to exercise self-determination and freedom in their independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital. The marked rise in Israel's illegal, provocative and unilateral acts, which are obstructing the goal of an independent, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, only serves to further convince the Palestinian leadership that the United Nations, in accordance with the principles enshrined in its Charter, is the appropriate venue to multilaterally pursue these legitimate and internationally supported goals.

There is no time to be spared, and we thus renew our appeal to the international community, including the Security Council, to uphold their responsibilities and to take immediate, decisive action to bring Israel, the occupying Power, into compliance with international law, including its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention, relevant United Nations resolutions and the Quartet road map. This is urgent to salvage the two-State solution of an independent, sovereign and viable State of Palestine, living side by side with Israel in peace and security on the basis of the pre-1967 borders.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 395 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 6 July 2011 (A/ES-10/523-S/2011/414), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Feda **Abdelhady-Nasser**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.